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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the State of Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by the guest Chaplain, Pastor Sunday Adelaja from Kiev, Ukraine.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

O, Lord of creation, we acknowledge Your lordship today, Your sovereignty, love, and power. We ask that You will bless the United States of America in these days of great uncertainties.

Bless the leaders of this great Nation with the wisdom needed to lead the Nation in the right direction. As leaders, we realize there are some things we want but do not need and some things we need but do not want. You have promised to meet our needs but not satisfy our greed. Help us to realize our decisions have a destiny, our choices have consequences, our path has a purpose, our faith has a foundation, our home has a hope, and this country has a cause.

Acknowledging that as America goes, so goes our world, I ask for a sweeping, weeping, and reaping revival throughout this great Nation. May Your Kingdom come and Your will be done in America as it is in heaven. Help us to remember that America is great because America is good. If America ceases to be good, it will cease to be great. God of heaven, please help America to continue to be good.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the State of Virginia, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 23, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the State of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WEBB thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today the time until 2:45 is equally divided, with the majority controlling the first portion of the time. Senator CASEY is here and will be using that time to do a tribute. At 2:45 today, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 761, the competitiveness bill. While there are no rollcall votes today, I understand the managers are working on some amendments which could be offered today. Later this week, we expect to receive the supplemental conference report, and the Senate will act on that report prior to concluding business this week.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business until 2:45 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the first half controlled by the majority leader or his designee and the second half controlled by the minority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

(The remarks of Mr. CASEY pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 166 are located in today's RECORD under "Submission of Concurrent and Senate Resolutions.")

Mr. CASEY. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

IRAQ FUNDING

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about an issue that seems to be the most pressing of any we have before us; that is, to fund our troops in Iraq.

I came to the floor on the 64th day following the President's submission to the Congress of legislation for funding our troops in the field. I believed it was important that we urge Congress to complete its work on this legislation immediately. How could there be anything more pressing than making funding available for our troops? Certainly, the time is now.

It is now day 77, and we still don't have a bill to send to the President. It is time we do so. In fact, the conference committee has not even met. Even though both houses of Congress have passed the measure, they have yet to come together between the Houses in order to do something. Our military leaders are people in the best position

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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to prioritize the needs of our troops. They are the ones who know what needs to be done and what the timing is. They have left no doubt that this funding is urgently needed, without arbitrary deadlines or unrelated pork, both of which are in the bill.

Unfortunately, there are a number of Members who want to call the shots and micromanage the execution of the war. I understand there are different views about the war. There are different views about what our role should be. But the fact is, we are there now. We have had a change in direction. We have some new ideas, new leadership. But we have the troops there. They need to be supported financially so they cannot only do their job, certainly, but protect themselves. If we don't get this funding to the troops, the first thing to be cut without this supplemental will be facilities maintenance throughout the services, particularly the Army.

In addition, counseling programs for both troops and their families will have to be cut back. As to this idea that there is no hurry, that we can find the money somewhere else, Members need to be sure they understand that finding it somewhere else takes it away from someone else who has earned it, either through service or families of service people. More and more troops and their families are seeking counseling, and reducing funding at this critical time certainly needs to be avoided.

Failing to act immediately will have real-life impacts on military personnel. I should think we could come to that understanding. I don't know quite what the timing is seeking to do—apparently, impress on the President the points of view being made on the other side of the aisle or whatever. But he has made it clear what he is going to do. We know that. We know we have to go there and get it vetoed, come back and find something that is acceptable. All that takes time. All the time we spend puts more risk on the military and their families.

I believe failing to enact this legislation very soon will have real-life impacts on our military personnel. I can't find much reason for that. If we can't take care of our troops' mental health and see that they aren't living in dilapidated barracks, we will have a hard time ensuring they are able to fight when the Nation calls. I hope we can continue to remember what giving these people are doing, what they are sacrificing. We need, of course, to support them.

It is very simple. If our troops don't have the training to deploy, then our soldiers and sailors overseas cannot come home, and that is kind of the situation we are increasingly in now. At this point the only priority should be funding our troops in the field. Even though we have other work to do, certainly if we look at priorities, what could be more important than dealing with the needs of our troops overseas.

I don't know if James Baker would have been any clearer when we reiter-

ated that the Iraq Study Group report does not set timetables or deadlines for the troop withdrawal.

James Baker said:

The [Iraq Study Group] report does not set timetables or deadlines for the removal of troops, as contemplated by the supplemental spending bill the House and the Senate passed. In fact, the report specifically opposes that approach. As many military and political leaders told us, an arbitrary deadline would allow the enemy to wait us out and strengthen the positions of extremists over moderates.

Several months ago the President indicated he would establish a new direction in Iraq. General Petraeus is back in Washington today to report on the counterinsurgency plan. Certainly, it isn't doing everything we want it to yet. It hasn't achieved success yet. But it is moving in the right direction. We have a change in people. We have a change in leadership. We have a change in the plan. It has only been 3 months since we installed the general and only 60 percent of the troops are in place he had wanted and suggested were necessary. Despite these modest improvements, the other side wants to pack up and admit defeat. They are also claiming the war is lost, and that is unfortunate, especially when our troops hear those comments. In any event, I hope this Congress does what is responsible and sends the President a bill. Our troops deserve to know Congress will provide them with the funding they need to succeed.

I wanted to talk on that issue. It is one of the most important we have. I look forward to proceeding with what will be before us on the floor now, education. Sharpening up our competitiveness is very important. I am hopeful we can assure Members that this program with this money and additional spending will have some impact. As we look at it, we have lots of programs that are designed to strengthen education, yet we don't have a very good measurement of whether those dollars are causing things to happen that we hoped they would.

I look forward to that.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time remains in morning business on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Nine minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Chair.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, for the past several weeks, there has been a lot

of debate and discussion about the emergency supplemental appropriations bill that has been pending now before Congress for more than 2 months. Completion of this emergency supplemental is critical for our troops serving on the front lines and for their families here at home.

The President has requested, and Congress should be prepared to send immediately to the White House, a clean bill that meets our obligations to the troops. This legislation should not be used as a vehicle to pass billions of dollars of unrelated Federal spending or impose artificial deadlines on our commanders in the field. We have to move forward with this important military funding legislation because our troops deserve nothing less.

I want to highlight a few of the items that are included in this supplemental appropriations bill so our colleagues can appreciate how essential it is to get these funds to our troops as soon as possible.

This funding will ensure that our forces who are engaged in operations overseas have the very best force protection equipment available, as well as the most effective weaponry, communications gear, munitions, and other essential items.

For example, high priority items in the supplemental for our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan include: funding for body armor and other personal protection items; aircraft survivability components, radios, night vision equipment, armored vehicles, and high mobility, multipurpose vehicle Fragmentation Kits; funding for Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Systems, at \$2.4 billion.

Yes, that Improvised Explosive Device Defeat System is the very type of technology we need to protect our troops from the type of weapon that has been more responsible than virtually any other for injuring our soldiers.

In the supplemental, more than \$5 billion in funding is designed for the ongoing surge of U.S. forces to support General Petraeus's revised strategy in Baghdad. Nearly \$4 billion in funding is to accelerate the transition of two Army brigade combat teams and establish a new Marine Corps regimental combat team. Nearly \$2 billion is to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps to build combat capability, and lengthen the time soldiers and marines have between deployments.

There is some very important equipment our troops are being denied while we linger in passing this important supplemental. As I mentioned a moment ago, IEDs, or improvised explosive devices, continue to strike our troops during ambushes, and IEDs are responsible for a substantial number of the casualties.

The Marines and the Army have responded to enemy tactics with the acquisition of substantial numbers of up-armored HMMWVs and advanced armor kits for other vehicles. But the Army